Hidden behind the finished products of history are long, painstaking processes of evaluating both sources and the narratives produced from them. Using examples from contemporary British and Welsh history, this article considers the issues of how sources are selected, how competing explanations are reconciled, the literary experience of writing and interpreting, the influence of the historian’s own position, and finally the historian’s responsibility to the reader and his/her subject. In doing so, the article demonstrates how the historian shapes the history that s/he writes but it also maintains that this is not a reason to discard history or despair about its possibilities. As long as we are reflective and self-aware, critical history can still be written.

From E. H. Carr’s *What is History?* (1961) onwards, reflecting on the nature of history has concentrated on epistemological issues such as the limitations of sources, the subjectivity of interpretations and the construction of knowledge. These discussions have lent towards the abstract and the philosophical. They say much about the principles and assumptions of writing history but very little about its mechanics. Even books whose titles suggest they are about the writing of history are usually actually about the content of that history.¹ Historians discuss the underpinning ideas of what history is but they know very little about how its outputs were written. We require our students to put methodological sections in their theses but we rarely have such discussions in our own books and articles. Even where historians do discuss their methodologies, this rarely extends beyond outlining sources and their limitations. The scientist can follow a step-by-step method if s/he wishes to recreate someone else’s experimental research but the historian can only guess at how their peers research, think and write.

This article reflects on the processes of producing a piece of written history. It is about practice rather than theory. The intention is to put the generally abstract discussion of historical research onto a more practical footing through discussing what is actually done rather than the underpinning principles of historical knowledge. Although much of what is discussed is applicable to writing about any period, the discussion is framed within the context of contemporary history, that shifting period usually defined as within living memory.² There are three reasons for this. The first is that some of the unique characteristics of contemporary history throw generic issues of writing history into sharper relief. Contemporary historians have more sources at their disposal; they are more aware of
the subjectivity of the interpretations; they write about people who can answer back. The second reason is that contemporary history is sometimes rather denigrated by scholars of earlier, more established periods and traditions. It is sometimes felt better left to political scientists or even journalists. Even those who practice it can struggle with its complexities and its multidisciplinary literature. Thus reflecting on its nature might further its legitimacy. The third reason is, quite simply, that this is the period that I am most experienced in writing about and the discussion draws upon my own experience of writing a survey book on Wales since 1939.

The article tours through the issues of how sources are selected, how competing explanations are reconciled, the literary experience of writing and interpreting, the influence of the historian’s own position, and finally the historian’s responsibility to the reader and his/her subject. In doing so it demonstrates how the historian shapes the history that s/he writes but it also maintains that this is not a reason to discard history or despair about its possibilities. This is simply how historical practice is. As long as we are aware of this, critical history can still be written. This method might not be perfect but it is all we have.

Historians start with sources. Those studying earlier periods often have to deal with gaps and holes in the evidential record but the contemporary historian is more likely to be overwhelmed by sources. As A. J. P. Taylor noted in a 1975 overview, ‘History gets thicker as it approaches more recent times: more people, more events and more books written about them. More evidence is preserved, often, one is tempted to say, too much.’ For the historian trying to write a survey of a period, place or theme, this mass of material is particularly daunting. Geraint Jenkins noted in his survey of Wales how difficult it was to chart the ‘complex and tumultuous’ twentieth century, where the mass of documentary evidence was ‘stupefying large.’ This means that even for the most specific topic there will be usually another book, another newspaper, another film or another interview that could be looked at. While it may be tempting to use this as an excuse for procrastination, somewhere the process of data gathering has to come to an end if a contemporary history project is ever going to be finished. How we decide when we have enough evidence is neither scientific nor often reflected upon. It might simply be a matter of when the time or money to explore the sources has run out. More often it is probably when the historian is satisfied that s/he understands a topic, when more research might find more examples but not new ways of interpreting. In such cases, if we have good evidence to support what we have decided to argue then there often seems little point looking for more.

This might sound sensible but achieving that sense of certainty is no easy task because of the complexity of the past. Writing a national history is a clear illustration of this. Modern nations are comprised of different peoples, with different ideas, experiences and outlooks. Many of these are wholly incompatible and very contradictory. The past is thus a very plural place, with a multitude of different opinions and perspectives. Explaining even close to every single one would make for an unreadable and unmanageably long account. (Much the same was probably true of older periods too but the historian is less aware of that plurality since it is further away from his or her personal
experience). The task of the historian is to reconcile them, make sense them and put them in some form of order that makes sense to a reader without betraying the subjects themselves. As Catterall puts it, history has to ‘summarize an infinite range of memories’. If contemporary historians do not stress the sheer variety of experiences they end up misrepresenting what happened. The 1960s is a classic example of that and it is only recently that its historiography has moved away from concentrating on protest and permissiveness to stressing how metropolitan many of the ideas of the Swinging Sixties were. But even then the revisionism has gone too far, missing the sense and fear of change that existed in areas where continuity was more characteristic of actual behaviour.

The reality is that however one chooses to interpret the 1960s there will always be plenty of evidence to support the case. Nearly always, the recent past can be interpreted in conflicting ways and all quite plausibly. One political scientist has wryly remarked,

Airy generalizations about cultural change are the most superficial form of social comment. Take a few casual impressions, add some personal hunches, sprinkle with some statistics, and a plausible case can be made for almost any thesis about how the values of the British have changed.

Contemporary views should be added to that list since they are often so varied that they too usually provide evidence to support any case. A good historian will always point to the existence of competing contemporary opinions and interpretations but s/he has also to decide which was most prevalent if history is not to become just an assortment of conflicting evidence. But too often it is not clear where the weight of the evidence is pointing and majority views are impossible to discern. Indeed, perhaps such majority views or dominant beliefs do not even always exist since individuals can both hold contradictory opinions and change their minds and views very quickly according to where they are, who they are with and what they are doing. Opinion polls are important indicators and one prominent political scientist has said he is tempted to claim ‘that one could write the history of Britain over the past 70 years from survey evidence alone’. Historians are more sceptical. As Field points out, ‘polls are a record of what respondents claim to believe or claim to do, rather than an objective and scientific verification of what they actually believe or actually do. There is no doubt that interviewees are sometimes tempted to give what they feel will be the socially respectable and acceptable answer to a question’. Deciding how to negotiate the confusing mass of conflicting evidence comes down, like the decisions over which sources to use or even which examples to employ from those sources, to what an author wishes to say. Historians might wish to judge and present the past on its own terms but that, ultimately, is impossible because its own terms are so varied and elusive. It is simply not possible to assemble and acknowledge the full kaleidoscope of events, ideas and trends of the past. Even when conducting very specific studies, comprehensive accounts of everything that was said and done are impossible and thus historians have to choose what goes in their history. When writing broad overarching narratives then the matter of selection is even more significant. For some historians the
selection of themes is decided, quite overtly, by what matters in their present. The rest can then be discarded as irrelevant. In contemporary more than other kinds of history, the desire to explain the present has been particularly strong. The problem here is that what is irrelevant today might not be tomorrow and there is something to be said for looking at trends or ideas that did fade away into modern irreverence.

Andy Beckett’s history of Britain in the 1970s notes that it ‘tries to select and scrutinize – for in single, sometimes forgotten events the essence of a time quite often lies – rather than painstakingly list and summarize.’ It is difficult to disagree with such an approach and it certainly makes for more readable books but it does not help with selecting sources to study selected events or indeed help decide how to discover those forgotten events which can be so informative in the first place. At the very outset of research decisions need to be taken on where to look for evidence. Our prior knowledge of a topic, which is often based on not just past research but also popular mythology or even our own memories, thus becomes a key decider in the approach that is initially chosen. If we base our selections of evidence or topics on the arguments that we want to make the problem becomes the extent to which we end up finding evidence because we were looking for it. Of course, new avenues might open as new research is published or unexpected things are found in the historical record but it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the base from where a historian begins plays a very significant role in where his or her research ends up.

To cope with this I tried to introduce a degree of arbitrariness into the research process by picking random years to examine the local press, browsing the library shelves, reading whatever newspapers were left waiting to be picked up by other readers at the National Library of Wales, exploring second-hand shops, typing Wales into ebay and following link after link online. This was all particularly useful in finding forgotten novels and travel books. But even when something interesting is found understanding its significance can be problematic. It is the quirky and the unexpected that stands out amongst the sheer quantity of information. That might not make it significant or representative and some historians point to the ‘risk of elevating the transient over the historically important’. The transient does matter, not least when people at the time took it seriously, unaware of what lay in the future. Nonetheless, opinions and ideas that were transient and which were found by the historian rather serendipitously or because they were being looked for again raises the question of how to look for patterns and decide where the weight of the evidence is pointing.

Ultimately, attempting to solve these issues is a literary exercise. The historian’s skill is to generalize from fragmented pieces of evidence and to write a history where assertions are qualified and the nuances of the past clear. That can be as simple as inserting a ‘probably’ into a judgement but it usually rather more difficult than that. The skill of writing is as important to the historian as an understanding of how to work with sources. As Marwick points out, history is not just about ‘finding out’, it is also about communication. Thus one textbook describes history as a hybrid discipline, ‘combining the technical and analytical procedures of a science’ in working with sources, ‘with the imaginative and stylistics qualities of an art’ in writing. Yet how historians write remains shrouded in uncertainty. If we follow the advice we give our graduate students then it is
probably rarely the end of the research process but rather an ongoing exercise, something which again raises questions about the extent to which the data gathering process is determined by pre-existing judgements. Do historians come up with a structure, look for evidence and then write it up, adjusting the structure as they see fit in light of what they found? This might be how we advise undergraduates to do their essays but it is rather ideal and does not help much with deciding when we have enough evidence. Do historians review their evidence and then plan out a detailed structure (by every section, paragraph, sentence?) and write it up, maybe going back to do more research where the end result was not satisfactory? Or do historians just sit with a mass of evidence in front of them, pick a starting point and type away, seeing what emerges? Personally, I tend to write sections about specific ideas and pieces of evidence as I find or think about them, and then later try different ways of fitting them together. Yet sometimes we are not even sure of how we work ourselves. I often write with the music of the period under study in the background in the hope this might help me get into the heads of those I am writing about. Thus a chapter on nationalism was written to the rabble-rousing protest songs of Dafydd Iwan, while punkish, class-conscious tunes accompanied the construction of a chapter on trade unionism in the 1970s and early 1980s. I have no idea whether this has any impact but I do it nonetheless.

In a rare reflection on the writing process, Brian Harrison has noted when starting to write on any particular topic I usually found myself somewhat daunted by a mere jumble of facts and ideas. Yet I was quite often surprised at how the pieces gradually and almost spontaneously fitted into place, given that the pattern had not initially been present in my mind. This gradual and almost spontaneous emergence of a pattern took place at every level: within the treatment of particular topics, but also in the arrangement within sections, between sections, or in the book as a whole. Its initial plan differed almost totally from the plan as published many years later.19

Writing history is not always that straightforward. Patterns do not always emerge easily, at least for me. I can spend hours moving bits of text around, trying to work out where things should go and what is related to what. I might have an evocative event or quote that I am sure is significant in one way or another but I am not quite sure how. Sometimes I am not even sure what the author of a piece of evidence intended. Insights and hunches matter as my topics are moved around until they fit into a narrative that makes sense, both in terms of the analysis offered and the literary flow of the piece. Even then I might discover interpretations I have offered in one place of a book do not quite tally with things I have said elsewhere in the same work. So much of the skill of being a good historian is holding a huge amount of information in sight all at the same time. To concede all this is not to accept that history is purely a literary invention. The patterns that emerge might be ones that a historian has created rather than simply discovered but, in constructing narratives that work as pieces to be read, the place of sources never goes away; a historian still has to be confident that judgements make historical rather than just literary sense.
With the decision making the historian employs when writing largely hidden and unspoken – whether on which pieces of evidence to investigate and include, on whether structures should be chronological or thematic or on whether interpretations stand up to the weight of evidence – the reader is left to trust the professional judgements of the writer. Thus a reader has to believe that when a writer says ‘for example, the example given is indeed one of many that might have been employed rather than a lone piece of evidence. Historians not only rarely give details of how many other pieces of evidence there are, they also do not discuss how many supporting pieces of evidence are needed for confidence to be had that an example illustrates what they say it does. References might reassure us but the constraints of space mean footnotes rarely refer to every single piece of evidence for a general point of interpretation. Moreover, we might glance at the references as we read (although less so if they are endnotes rather than footnotes) but only when an argument is close to our own field of investigation do we actually go and check the citations. We rely on secondary sources to contextualize our own research but if we went back to check the sources of every book we ever cited, we would spend all our time in the archives and never finish anything. Thus history involves a faith in the workings, methods and professionalism of the historian. Without this faith it would become impossible. That is not naïve. There is a sense of professional and intellectual duty to get things right and always the danger that someone might follow up our references and expose any follies, shortcuts or stupidity.20

This cannot counter the issue that all historians produce histories that are products of themselves as much as the sources. They do try to be objective, fair and comprehensive. They reference their work to allow evaluation. They do not ignore interpretations or evidence they do not like but in the questions they ask, even if not in the answers they find, they are being themselves. Some thus feel the need to warn that ‘Contemporary history, even more than other history, must be self aware about its politics.’21 Historians outside academia are sometimes better at that, even acknowledging it in the titles they give their books.22 In contrast, some academic historians write rather defensive qualifications. John Benson’s social history of twentieth-century Britain notes:

The author of this book makes no claim to intellectual superiority or out-of-the-ordinary objectivity. He recognizes that he is as likely as anybody else to struggle to break free from the values and assumptions held by those of his particular age, gender, ethnic, generational, class and occupational background.23

The impact of this can be sometimes quite obvious. Smith and Francis’ twentieth-century history of the south Wales miners, for example, has a rather heroic undertone in its description of an alternative society that rejected wider norms. This analysis is not surprising given how one of the authors is the son of a Communist miners’ leader and now a Labour MP himself.24 More common is for the authors’ position to be more subtle. There were hints in Harrison’s second volume on contemporary Britain of the complaints of some of his class and generation. Thus the ‘casual informality’ of life is seen as a downside, adverts on television ‘shortened the attention span and trivialized the overall mood’, while
‘deeply ruminative articles’ on football and pop music in the broadsheets were signs of cultural decline.25

Breaking free from the assumptions of your background is particularly difficult for a historian is writing about a period s/he has lived through. The experiences, explanations and mindsets under study can seem immediately familiar and the contemporary historian has to do as much to become detached from his or her subject as an earlier historian has to do to become connected with it.26 Yet complete detachment is probably impossible. Thus at least one historian has made a virtue of being too young to remember the period he writes about. In the preface to his book on the late 1950s and early 1960s Sandbrook claims:

As probably the first historian to write about the period whose earliest memories only just encompass the period before Thatcherism, I have very little interest either in celebrating an exaggerated golden age of hedonism and liberation, or in condemning an equally exaggerated era of modern degradation and national decline.27

Yet there are advantages to having lived through the period which is being written about. Tosh has noted that historians fill the gaps in the record ‘by being so thoroughly exposed to the surviving sources that they have a “feel” or instinct for what might have happened’.28 Contemporary historians have a distinct advantage in developing that ‘feel’ since they have their own sense of ‘the atmosphere of the time’ to guide them through the sources.29 Thus Hennessy’s history of the 1950s notes parallels between historians’ themes for the period and his own images and memories, which still, he notes, ‘shape and colour my approach as a historian and author’. Indeed, he inserts his own memories into the text, becoming ‘a conscious figure’ in the book.30 Others shy away from that, not least because it is not as easy as it might first seem to recall how one felt about certain events and inevitably hindsight, knowledge of what happened next and our own evolving personal situations all colour our memories. Indeed, one historian of Thatcherism has noted ‘it is sobering to realize how hard I find it to recapture my own real feelings’.31

Thus perhaps more important than inserting oneself into the narrative in an explicit or implicit acknowledgement that the history is a personalized account is for the historian to reflect on how his or her personal position has affected the analysis. Only through self-aware reflection can personal bias be countered. This is presumably what contemporary historians do but, apart from perhaps a few cursory words in an introduction, the majority rarely write about it, perhaps out of a fear that any concession of impartiality might undermine the argument in the eyes of the reader. I have certainly tried to stop my background and my politics from colouring the answers I have come up with but they have shaped the questions I have asked. That is evident in how questions of national identity are central to my work; having grown up in an English-speaking family in a strongly Welsh-speaking community, such questions have mattered in my life. Yet it is far too simple to just say that historians write histories that are coloured by who they are. The historian’s personal position can be as unstable as the people s/he writes about. Moreover, the actual experience of researching and writing history itself impacts on the historian’s views. It
encourages us to see the world in more nuanced, qualified and complex terms. Having researched contemporary Wales I better appreciate how resilient Welsh identity has been but also how for the majority it is not quite the issue that it has been in my life.

All historians might have dialogues with themselves over what they are doing and saying but the contemporary historian is unique in sometimes having a dialogue with the people being written about. The contemporary historian’s mistakes might be spotted by those ‘who were there’ but that same group might add to the confusion through their own commentaries on what is written of their history. Lord Crickhowell, Secretary of State for Wales between 1979 and 1987, for example has complained how his government has been blamed by an historian for the closure of Ebbw Vale and East Moors steelworks, closures which actually happened before the Tories took office in May 1979. But in his effort to defend the government he was part of he adds Shotton to the list of steelworks whose closure is wrongly attributed to the Conservatives, saying its ‘long foreseen’ closure was ‘within weeks of our taking office’. The Labour government had actually deferred the closure BSC was long seeking but the Tories not only let it go ahead but made it inevitable by announcing in June 1979 that there would no more subsidies of BSC’s losses after March 1980. Plans were announced in July 1979 and the first redundancies took place in December 1979 and it was the new year of 1980 when 6,400 men were made redundant. Edwards’ broad point is absolutely correct that the rundown of steel predated Thatcher but he is not right to suggest that the Tories were simply dealing ‘with the aftermath of decisions taken during the period of a Labour administration’.

Of course, not all subjects know or care what is written about them. Holding high office has to lead to a certain amount of thick skin, especially for those politicians whose careers coincided with or post-date Spitting Image (1984), an era when British political satire became far more personal. It is thus often less important politicians or those who are not public figures who get more affronted at the treatment of their history. I once interviewed a local politician who brought along advisors to the meeting and joked at its start that he hoped I had a good libel lawyer. A member of the audience saying something along the lines of ‘it wasn’t like that’ has been a feature of probably every public contemporary history talk I have given. One lady’s comment was simply to point out that she was actually there; it was unclear whether the implication was that the analysis given was wrong or that history should only be discussed by first-hand witnesses. Such attitudes owe much to how historians seek to correct the myths that surround the recent past, myths that might not be any more commonplace than those for earlier periods but which people perhaps feel more attachment to because they relate to their lives. Indeed, Vinen has claimed that contemporary historians should adopt myth busting ‘as their first responsibility’. People’s resistance to a demythologizing of their history can even be to the extent that they consciously understand they are adopting a distorted view. Thus one writer has suggested that the revisionism of seeing the flooding of Cwm Tryweryn not as an English imperialist outrage but something that happened to a village that had no future with residents who were secretly pleased to get compensation is ‘besides the point’. To him the myth is ‘based on principle, it became a symbol of the resistance which helped give rise
to a new future’. Thus what subjects can object to is not so much the truth being pointed out but how demythologizing might undermine their cause.

Should historians worry about what the people they write about think? Do individuals have some form of ownership over their history? This is a key concern within the field of oral history where, despite the field’s belief in the importance of empowering the subject, there has often been an acknowledgement of a vertical power relationship, with the researcher at the top and the researched at the bottom. After all, no matter what the testimony is, it is up to the historian how it is ultimately presented and interpreted. There have thus been calls for the process to be under the control of the ‘researched’, in order to avoid an imbalance between appropriation of the testimony and empowerment of the topic. Similar concerns have been present within the social sciences and the ethical guidelines of British Sociological Association suggest that:

**Sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests.**

They do, however, note that ‘In some cases, where the public interest dictates otherwise and particularly where power is being abused, obligations of trust and protection may weigh less heavily. Nevertheless, these obligations should not be discarded lightly.’ Of course, defining the public interest is very difficult and as much a political judgement as anything else, but the emphasis within these guidelines is clearly on the interests of the subject. The danger with this approach is that it restricts the ability of the researcher to interpret a topic in a way that the subject does not like. However, as long as the opinion of the subject is not misrepresented and s/he is aware of the project’s scopes and aims, then, ethically, researchers should be free to interpret their subject’s testimony, lives and actions. Historians have been very slow to tackle these ethical issues, perhaps because their arguments are hidden away in obscure academic tomes or more likely because the majority of their subjects are dead and thus unable to complain that they are being misrepresented or that their private papers have been interpreted in ways that they do not approve of. Yet for the contemporary historian such questions demand consideration. This should not be a distraction. Considering carefully how a subject might interpret their history differently can lead to a stronger analysis and a more robust case being made by the historian. Historians do not have to pander to or empower their subjects, simply make sure that arguments are as clear, evidenced and balanced as possible. This might sound easy in theory but in practice I still found it impossible to not worry about whether I might offend someone, be they a public figure or a member of an abstract group, that I was writing about. Human decency thus may well have at least toned down the language I employed, if not the actual argument.

Balanced judgements are, of course, more difficult in contemporary history because, as Thomson acknowledged back in 1967, there is the ‘insuperable deprivation’ and
This has dated some work. For example, Williams’ seminal 1985 history of Wales ends by seeing the nation as standing ‘under an acid rain’, a colourful turn of phrase influenced by the depression that beset so much of the Welsh intelligentsia after the No vote in the 1979 referendum on devolution. Time proved Williams wrong and Wales now probably has a stronger sense of its nationhood than ever before. My own history of Wales sees the devolution enacted in 1999 as a remarkable development given the uncertainties that surrounded Welsh identity before its inception. It was thus difficult not to see it as a climax of some sort. I cannot see the National Assembly for Wales ever being abolished and am sure that further devolution is inevitable but history easily takes a different course that could not be predicted. I am thus acutely aware that my own book could date in the way Williams’ did. Yet we can only write history as we see it.

Catterall sees the solution in contemporary history focussing on causes and trends rather than apparent outcomes. That makes sense but it might also reduce the impact of history. It perhaps encourages historians away from big ideas, the kind of ideas that could make a difference or at least get noticed. David Cannadine looked at what professionalization and the growth of higher education had done to British history, arguing that it became introspective, pedantic, narrow in focus and preoccupied with fine detail rather general interpretations. Too much of it was ‘little more than an intellectual pastime for consenting academics in private’. Perhaps more than any other kind of history, contemporary history can meet this challenge. When done well, it can be lively, entertaining, engaging, unsettling and provocative. When it achieves that, not only is the public expenditure on their production justified but so too is the thinking, agonizing and slog that went into their writing.

So what might this discussion of the practice of writing contemporary history contribute to the debates on the nature of history? It has confirmed the postmodern view that the role of the historian in shaping narratives about the past is fundamental, although presumably only the most traditional empiricist would say otherwise anyway. It offers nothing to corroborate the postmodern view that it is the historian that gives meaning to evidence through his/her interpretation. The traces of the past can be mined for meanings from that past. Yet, because the historian is selecting what evidence to employ from a contradictory pool, his/her position takes more precedence than opponents of postmodernism usually give credit for. It is not the evidence itself that is being invested with meaning by the historian but rather the argument that it is employed for. The contemporary historian’s argument is not some kind of historical truth waiting to be recovered or discovered but rather the deduction of the historian. When the method of gathering and employing data is so selective how can it be otherwise? But that does not mean the practice of writing history is something that should be discarded or is in need of defending. The accounts historians write might be inseparable from their own positions but historians are not fabricators or frauds. They are professionals who feel an obligation to the past and to their audiences to make their accounts as honest and as accurate as possible. The problem with writing history is not that the historian is imposing some false interpretation on the past but rather
that there are simply not analytical truths that can be retrieved. The past, like the present, is messy, complex and contradictory. Why things happen and what their consequences are, whether we are discussing the recent or ancient past, is always a matter of conjecture. The best a historian can do is to ensure his/her conjecture is as reflective, informed, evidenced and reasoned as possible.

NOTES:

1 For example, Robert Gildea and Anne Simonin, *Writing Contemporary History* (London, 2008).
16 Catterall, ‘What if Anything is Distinctive About Contemporary History’, 450.
20 If we are not aware of what can happen when we get it wrong then we should note the downfall of David Abraham after he made errors in a study of Weimar Germany. See Richard Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 1997), 116-123.
30 Peter Hennessy, Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties (London, 2007), 3.
36 For discussions of such issues see, for example, Sheena Rolph, ‘Ethical dilemmas: oral history work with people with learning difficulties’, Oral History, 26, 2 (1998), 65-72, and Daphne Patai, ‘Ethical problems of personal narratives, or, who should eat the last piece of cake?’, International Journal of Oral History, 8, 1 (1987), 5-27.
37 British Sociological Association, Statement of Ethical Practice (March 2002). http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm
40 G. A. Williams, When was Wales? (London, 1985).
41 On changing concerns in history see Peter Catterall, ‘Contemporary British history: A Personal View’. Contemporary British History, 16, 1 (2002), 1-10
42 Catterall, ‘What if Anything is Distinctive about Contemporary History’, 452.
44 It is rather misleading to talk of postmodern history since there is no single understanding of what it means and, indeed, postmodernism by definition stresses the plurality of any concept. However, here my understanding of what it means is shaped by Alun Munslow, The New History (London, 2003).